

Welcome!

With a marina providing access to some of North Carolina's best fishing spots, a secluded camping area beneath towering trees and miles of hiking trails that traverse a variety of distinct habitats — not to mention the presence of the Venus flytrap, one of the world's most unique carnivorous plants — it's no wonder Carolina Beach State Park is a popular coastal attraction.

Located in an area steeped in both history and natural diversity, Carolina Beach State Park includes a visitor center with exhibits depicting the wonders of its environment. Visit Carolina Beach State Park to relax, enjoy nature or embark on an eye-opening adventure.



Information

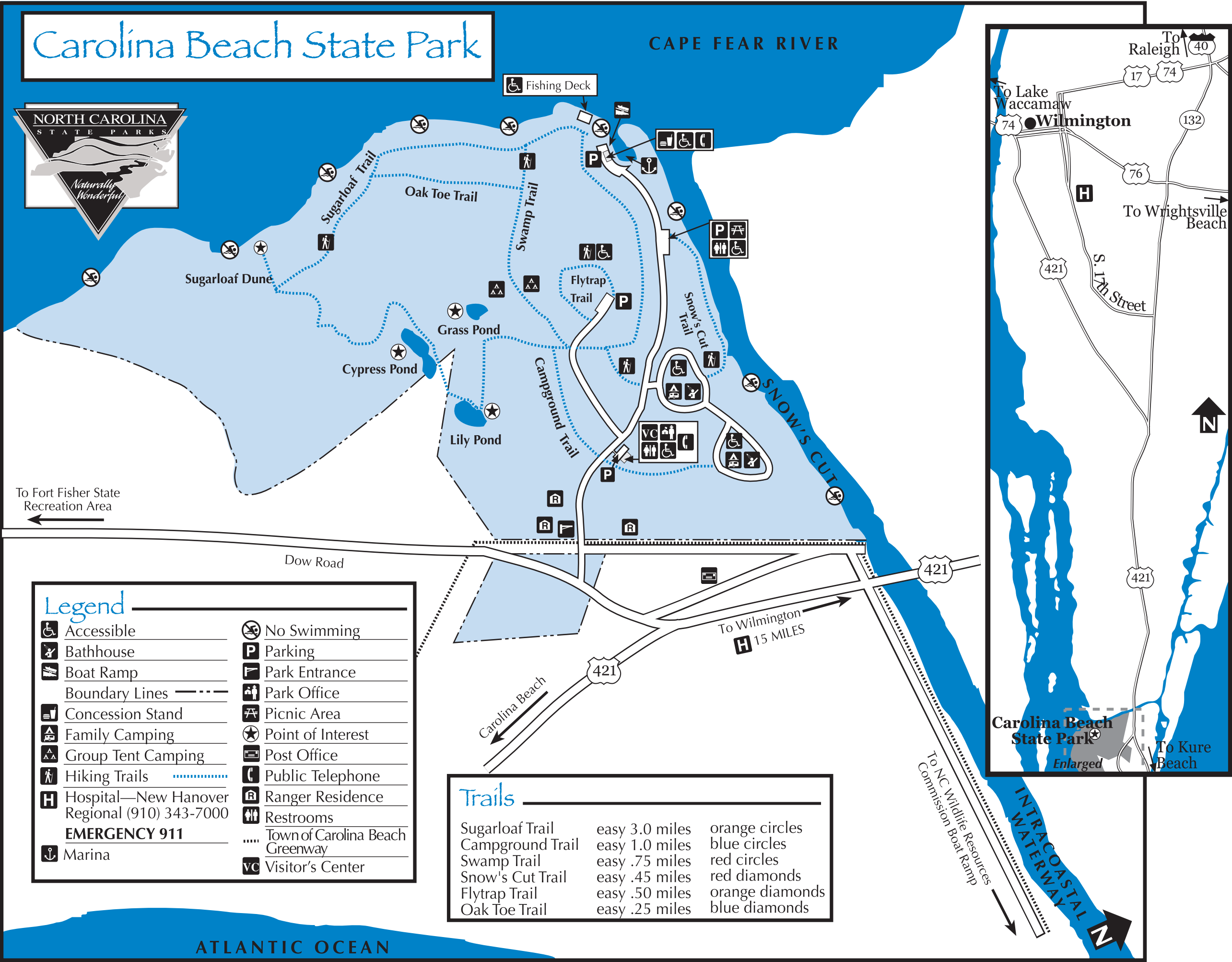
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Discover other North Carolina state parks and recreation areas, contact:

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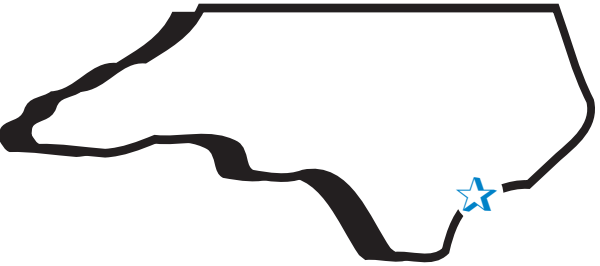


N.C. Division of Parks and Recreation
Department of Environment and Natural Resources



Carolina Beach
State Park

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Carolina Beach State Park is located in New Hanover County along Dow Road, 10 miles south of Wilmington off N.C. 421.

Park Hours

November - February	8 a.m. - 6 p.m.
March, April, September, October	8 a.m. - 8 p.m.
May - August	8 a.m. - 10 p.m.
Closed Christmas Day	

History Highlights

The Cape Fear Indians lived in and around the area that is now Carolina Beach State Park, prior to European settlement. Mainly occupying the land along the Cape Fear River and its tributaries, the small tribe grew hostile to early settlers and, in 1715, participated in an uprising against Europeans in the area. The Cape Fear Indians were defeated and left the area by 1725. Artifacts of the native culture, including pottery fragments, arrowheads and mounds of oyster shells, have been found in the area.

Early attempts at colonization in the area were unsuccessful, mainly due to conflicts with the Cape Fear Indians. Pirating, common in the area during colonial times, also contributed to the struggles of early settlers. In 1726, a permanent settlement was established along the lower Cape Fear. The newly settled land became an important arena for commerce when the English crown designated the Cape Fear River as one of five official ports of entry. Agricultural and timber products, naval stores, shipping and trade formed the basis of the economy.

Sugarloaf, a 50-foot sand dune near the bank of the Cape Fear River, appeared on navigational charts as early as 1738 and was an important landmark for river pilots. The dune was also of strategic significance during the Civil War when, as part of the Confederacy's defense of the port of Wilmington, about 5,000 troops camped on or near Sugarloaf during the siege of Fort Fisher.

Carolina Beach State Park was established in 1969 to preserve the unique environment along the intracoastal waterway.



The 761-acre park is located on a triangle of land known as Pleasure Island, which lies between the Atlantic Ocean and the Cape Fear River. The land became an island in 1930 when Snow's Cut was dredged, connecting Masonboro Sound to the Cape Fear River. Snow's Cut, a part of the Intracoastal Waterway, provides inland passage for boat traffic along the Atlantic coast.

Picnicking

The Carolina Beach State Park picnic area is located near the bank of Snow's Cut, between the campground and marina. Under the shade of large oak trees, tables and grills supply all the necessities for dining. A wheelchair-accessible site is also available. Water, restrooms and parking are conveniently located nearby.

Flora and Fauna

Plant life: Several coastal ecosystems are present in the park. Forests dominated by longleaf pine, turkey oak and live oak occupy the dry, coarse soil of a series of relict sand dunes. Between the dunes are dense shrub swamps, called pocosins, populated by pond pines, loblolly and sweet bay, yaupon and evergreen shrubs. Brackish marshes consisting primarily of cordgrasses and sedges can be found beyond the relict dunes adjacent to the river.



Three limesink ponds, each vegetated by a unique plant community, are found in the sand dunes. Cypress Pond, the most unusual limesink pond in the park, is dominated by a dwarf cypress swamp forest. Lily Pond is occupied by the broad, oval leaves and beautiful, white flowers of water lilies, which cover its waters in early summer. Grass Pond, which dries out almost every year, is filled with a variety of aquatic sedges. Carnivorous plants thrive in the boggy soil around its edge and in the park's acidic, mineral-poor soil.

Several interesting carnivorous plants thrive at Carolina Beach State Park by trapping and digesting insects. Among these carnivorous plants are pitcher plants, bladderworts, sundews and butterworts, but the most familiar—and the most spectacular—is the Venus flytrap.

With the appearance of a clam shell, the trap is actually a modified leaf. Its interior may be colored pale yellow to bright red. When its trigger hairs are touched by an insect, the halves close and the guard hairs mesh, entrapping its prey. The plant then secretes digestive fluids and, within three to five days, nutrients from the prey are absorbed and the trap reopens. Each trap dies after closing and opening three times. New traps emerge from underground stems to replace dead traps.

Venus flytraps are native only within 60 to 75 miles of Wilmington. New propagation methods have saved the flytrap from becoming an endangered species. However, their numbers are declining due to the destruction of their habitats. Controlled burning is beneficial to flytraps, as well as other kinds of carnivorous plants, as it discourages competing species.

Venus flytraps may be purchased at many retail nurseries. Help preserve this unique plant; do not remove the flytrap from the park.

Animal life: Carolina Beach State Park is a great place for bird watching. Brown pelicans thrive in the coastal environment and warblers, finches and woodpeckers fill the woods. In summer, painted buntings, yellowthroats and prairie warblers can be seen in the forest while ospreys populate Snow's Cut. Besides providing habitat for resident land birds during the winter and summer, Carolina Beach State Park also is located along an important migration corridor and attracts many birds during their migrations.

The small ponds in the park are home to several frog species. Carolina anoles, five-lined skinks, six-lined racerunners and various snake species are also found. Occasionally, an alligator will wander into the marina. White-tailed deer, raccoons and gray squirrels are abundant. Opossums, cottontails and other animals common to the southern coastal plain may be seen along with an occasional fox squirrel, gray fox or river otter.

Camping

Family Camping: The park's family campground is located in a wooded area near Snow's Cut. Pine and oak provide shade for 83 campsites, including two wheelchair-accessible sites. Each site is equipped with a picnic table and grill. Drinking water and restrooms with hot showers are located nearby.

Campsites are available on a first-come basis for a fee. Hookups are not provided for recreational vehicles, but a dump station is available for a fee. Green tags hanging from numbered campsite posts represent vacant sites. Upon choosing a site, take the tag to the marina office for registration. The park gate is locked daily at posted closing hours. Campers cannot leave the park by vehicle after closing or before 8 a.m., except in an emergency. Emergency procedures are provided during registration.

Group Camping: Two camping areas for organized groups are located along Swamp Trail and are available by advance reservation only. One site accommodates up to 20 people. The other site accommodates up to 35 people. These areas include picnic tables, fire circles and pit toilets. Water and shower facilities are not available. This area is accessible by foot only and located approximately 400 yards from the parking area.

Visitor Center

In addition to the multiple educational programs offered, the park's visitor center features environmental education exhibits that focus on the diversity of plant life within the park. With 13 different plant communities in Carolina Beach State Park, there's a lot to learn. From Venus flytraps to pitcher plants, from butterworts to bladderworts, the hands-on exhibits allow for interactive learning about many intriguing species.

Located near the park's entrance, the visitor center and exhibit hall are wheelchair accessible. The hall is open from 8 a.m. until 5 p.m. daily.

Trails

Six miles of trails wind through a variety of distinct habitats at Carolina Beach State Park. Relatively flat and easy to walk, the trails offer an opportunity to observe the diversity of plant and animal life in the park. Insects may be annoying during the warmer months, repellent is recommended. Bikes and horses are not allowed on the park trails.

Flytrap Trail is a pleasant wheelchair-accessible half-mile loop through pocosin, longleaf pine and turkey oak and savanna communities. Venus flytraps can be seen along the edges of the pocosins, and native orchids bloom along the trail. Parts of the trail travel along wooden boardwalks. Please stay on the trail, which is marked with orange diamonds, to avoid damaging small and fragile plants.

Sugarloaf Trail, marked with orange circles, offers a three-mile journey beginning at the marina parking lot. An excellent place for watching water birds and exploring the tidal marsh, the trail passes through the marsh, enters a pine forest and follows the river's edge to Sugarloaf. A habitat for fiddler crab, the trail offers the opportunity to observe these crustaceans as they travel over the mudflats.

Campground Trail is one mile in length and is marked with blue circles. It begins and ends at the family campground and briefly joins Sugarloaf Trail. Much of the trail leads through a coastal fringe sandhill forest. This plant community, dominated by longleaf pines and live oaks, is threatened and becoming very rare.

Snow's Cut Trail, less than a half-mile long and marked with red diamonds, travels from the family campground to the picnic area. The largest pine and hardwood trees in the park may be seen along this trail.

Swamp Trail, a three-quarter mile trail marked with red circles, begins and ends along Sugarloaf Trail. It provides access to the group camping areas, as well as views of a tidal cypress-gum swamp and brackish marsh that run opposite one another along the trail.

Oak Toe Trail is a quarter mile in length and connects Swamp Trail and Sugarloaf Trail. Marked with blue diamonds, the trail traverses an area where a coastal fringe evergreen forest and a coastal fringe sandhill forest meet. Various pines, oaks and oak toe lichen dominate this area.



Nature's Classroom

Rangers hold regularly scheduled educational and interpretive programs about Carolina Beach State Park. To arrange a special exploration of Carolina Beach State Park for your group or class, contact the park office.

Educational materials about Carolina Beach State Park have been developed for grades 5-8 and are correlated to North Carolina's competency-based curriculum in science, social studies, mathematics and English/language arts.

The Carolina Beach program introduces students to basic plant biology, focusing on carnivorous plants. Accompanying the program is a teacher's booklet and workshop, free of charge to educators.

Water Sports

Carolina Beach State Park offers access to a variety of waters. The fresh waters of the Cape Fear River, the estuarine waters of Masonboro Sound and the salt waters of the Atlantic Ocean are all only moments away.

Boating: A marina with two launching ramps and more than 40 boat slips is located at the junction of Snow's Cut and the Cape Fear River. Fuel, snacks and restrooms are available in the marina building. Showers are provided for slip renters. Tidal waters may be rough at times; exercise cautious seamanship.

Fishing: Fish from the river bank, the wheelchair-accessible fishing deck or launch your boat at the marina. Spot, flounder, sheepshead and striped bass are waiting. A N.C. Coastal Recreational Fishing License is required to fish in the park

Swimming: Swimming is prohibited throughout the park.

Rules & Regulations

Make your visit a safe and rewarding experience. Our rules are posted throughout the park. Help preserve our park by observing the following rules and regulations.

- ❑ The removal, destruction or injury of any plant, animal, rock or artifact is prohibited.
- ❑ North Carolina state parks are wildlife preserves. Hunting and trapping are prohibited. Do not feed the wildlife.
- ❑ Do not litter; help maintain a clean environment for other visitors. Place trash in proper receptacles. State law requires aluminum cans to be placed in recycling containers.
- ❑ North Carolina boating and fishing regulations apply in the park.
- ❑ Fires are permitted only in designated areas and must be tended at all times. Gathering firewood is prohibited.
- ❑ Camping is allowed in designated areas by permit only. All camping gear must be placed on tent pads where provided.
- ❑ As a courtesy to other campers, please observe the campground quiet hours.
- ❑ The possession or use of firearms, fireworks, cap pistols, air guns, bows and arrows, slingshots or lethal missiles of any kind are prohibited.
- ❑ Possession or consumption of alcoholic beverages is prohibited.
- ❑ North Carolina motor vehicle and traffic laws apply in the park.
- ❑ Pets must be on a leash no longer than six feet, have current rabies vaccination and must not be left unattended. Pet owners are responsible for cleaning up after their pets.

For Your Safety


To prevent accidents, remember these safety tips.

- ❑ Do not water ski in boat launching or mooring areas.
- ❑ Unfamiliar waters may be hazardous; exercise cautious seamanship.
- ❑ In warm weather, snakes, ticks and insects may be found in wooded areas of the park. Be alert and bring insect repellent.

Contact park staff for other safety tips or an explanation of park rules.

The N.C. Division of Parks and Recreation is a division of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources.

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Secretary

NCDENR

Michael F. Easley
Governor

10,000 copies of this public document were printed at a cost of \$1,218.88 or .12 cents each.
10M 4/08